

REMARKS

Claim 1 is pending in this application, and has been amended. No new claims have been added.

The Examiner has maintained from the previous Office Action the 35 USC §102(e) rejection of claim 1 as anticipated by **Nakazawa et al.**

Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As noted in our response of November 17, 2003, Fig. 2 of **Nakazawa et al.** shows “a seal portion 18 of common construction (not shown in detail) interposed” between first and second fluid coupling members, as disclosed in column 4, lines 22-24. The “seal portion” appears to include an O-ring gasket, but Fig. 2 of **Nakazawa et al.** fails to show any part of the “seal portion” which corresponds to “gasket holding annular ridges on butting end faces thereof”, as recited in claim 1 and as represented by members 71a, 72a in Fig. 1(b) of the instant application.

Furthermore, it should be noted that in the prosecution of the corresponding European application 99122292.8, claim 1 was allowed over the prior art of record with the inclusion of the following language into claim 1 via amendment:

... that the gasket holding ridges are in contact with the gasket at its radial midportion and accordingly the inner peripheral portion of the gasket is free of stress concentration and therefore develops no wrinkles.

This limitation is supported on page 10, lines 17-22 of the specification of the instant application.

The “seal portion” in Nakazawa et al. fails to be rounded so as to be in contact with the gasket only at its radial midportion, as are the ridges 71a, 72a in Fig. 1(b) of the instant application.

Accordingly, claim 1 has been amended to recite the rounded shape of the annular ridges, and the 35 USC §102(e) rejection should be withdrawn.

In view of the aforementioned amendments and accompanying remarks, claim 1, as amended, are in condition for allowance, which action, at an early date, is requested.

If, for any reason, it is felt that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants’ undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. **09/437,296**
Response to Office Action dated January 12, 2004

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Please charge any fees for such an extension of time and any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper, to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

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PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

Enclosures: Petition for Extension of Time

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